

News Release



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Photos available

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An American Home: Will Rogers State Historic Park

PACIFIC PALISADES: Up from the parking area of Will Rogers State Historic Park are the ranch buildings, including the visitor center, which was once the guesthouse garage. Visitors can imagine the famous people who once stayed there. You can picture Will Rogers, movie star, author and American legend, entertaining his guests with a funny story – or a lasso trick.

Located at 1501 Will Rogers State Park Road (before it reaches the ocean) in Pacific Palisades, the park visitor center features a film on the life of Will Rogers, literature and an audio tour of the grounds. The ranch buildings and grounds are maintained as they were when the Rogers family lived there in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Rogers lived in his ranch with his wife Betty and their three children, Will, Jr., Mary, and James. The 31-room ranch house, which includes ten bedrooms, ten baths and seven fireplaces. The ranch became a State Park in 1944 after the death of Mrs. Rogers.

Famous for his wit, Will Rogers was also famous for his love of horses and rope tricks. His career in vaudeville took him to Broadway and the Ziegfeld Follies and then on to Hollywood for movies, his own newspaper column, and radio show. Will Rogers also loved polo, and polo is still played on the polo field in the park from April to October, weather permitting, on Saturdays from 2 – 5 p.m. and Sundays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The living room of the main ranch house, with a collection of Indian rugs and baskets, features a porch swing in the center of the room and a mounted calf, which was given to Will Rogers to encourage him to rope the calf instead of his friends.

The north wing of the house contains the family bedrooms, Will's study, and the sunroom.

Beyond the ranch are trails that lead to spectacular views of the countryside around the park. Since Will Rogers State Historic Park is on the tip of the Santa Monica Mountains, the trails offer views of both the sea and the mountains. Visitors can hike to Inspiration Point or take the Rogers trail into the adjacent Topanga State Park.

Photographs and newsreels show Will Rogers with presidents, statesmen, politicians, socialites, celebrities and common people from all walks of life. While others are dressed in suits and ties, Will is often seen in his cowboy attire. Unlike many other people in Hollywood, he was a cowboy. He had many careers in his relatively short life of 55 years. He was a professional rodeo performer, cowboy, trick roper, vaudeville comedian, actor, radio personality, newspaper columnist, author, humorist and aviator. In fact, one of his great passions was aviation. It was ironic that after years of flying and promoting air travel, Will Rogers died with Wiley Post in an aircraft accident near Point Barrow, Alaska, on August 15, 1935.

Thanks to the family of Will Rogers, the ranch was donated to the State of California in 1944 for the enjoyment of the visiting public.

Several maintenance projects have been undertaken at the park recently. Thanks to public support, approximately \$3 million has been earmarked for a variety of long over-due maintenance work. The funds will help to preserve Will Rogers' fine art collection and precious memorabilia inside the historic home. Part of the money has also been earmarked for structural work at the main ranch house.

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